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On POS Labeling in Chinese-English General
Dictionaries: A Cognitive Perspective

认知视角的汉英语文词典词类标注研究

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Synopsis

Chinese bilingual lexicography has yielded abundant fruits both in theory and practice in recent years. Impressive accomplishments have been achieved on English-Chinese bilingual lexicography. But Chinese-English dictionary compilation is awaiting progress and breakthrough. Although dozens of excellent Chinese-English dictionaries have been published since 1970s, the problem of utility scale has been the target of lexicographical criticism. One suggestion to improve the utility scale is the presentation of parts-of-speech (POS) indication in Chinese-English dictionaries. So POS labeling has attracted more and more attention from scholars.

The recognition of parts of speech (POS) is the prerequisite of accurate translation of headwords in bilingual dictionaries. However, POS labeling is not as easy as labels of register in a Chinese-English dictionary. On the one hand, POS study is always a Gordian knot to Chinese linguists ever since the beginning of Modern Chinese Linguistics. Disputes exist both in theory and practical operation, such as the nature of POS, the strategies on multifunctionality and the definition of multi-category words. On the other hand, POS labeling in Chinese-English dictionaries is a longstanding and complicated problem, which matters greatly as a minor step may lead to major consequences. What's worse, present studies are weak-based, methodologically outdated, and there exist some disputes with regard to such major questions as the target of POS labeling, the principle of translation by POS, and the basis of POS labeling in Chinese-English dictionaries.

This thesis starts from the theories of bilingual lexicography, reviews the history of Chinese-English dictionary compilation and proposes POS labeling is crucial to the breakthrough of the bottleneck in Chinese-English dictionary compilation. Then it takes an overview of the present POS studies in Chinese linguistics and introduces the prototypical categorization theory and decategorization theory, including grammatical metaphor in functional linguistics and conceptual

metonymy in cognitive linguistics as its theoretical framework to explore the synchronic and diachronic features of POS categories. Based on these, the thesis discusses specific issues concerning POS labeling in Chinese-English general dictionary compilation from the cognitive perspective and gives positive answers. At last, it concludes some findings, for example, POS labeling should base on Chinese corpus instead of relying on the present Chinese dictionaries. Meanwhile, the thesis makes some suggestions on the future task.

Therefore, the research is of both theoretical and practical significance in bilingual lexicographical study, especially C-E general dictionary compilation.

Key Words: C-E general dictionaries, POS labeling, Categorization

摘 要

我国双语词典编纂无论在理论还是实践方面都已经取得了丰硕的成果。其中在英汉双语词典方面的成就尤为显著。但是汉英双语词典编纂仍然有待提高, 尽管 20 世纪 70 年代以后也出现了一些优秀的汉英词典, 但是实用性问题仍然词典评论的焦点。为了解决这一难题, 不少学者提出应该在汉英语文词典中提供词类信息。因此, 近年来汉英语文词典中的词类标注成为了中外学者最关注的问题。

准确的词类识别是双语词典中词目释义准确的前提。但是, 词类标注并没有像语体标注那么简单。首先, 从汉语语言学的角度看, 词类问题也一直是一个老大难问题。词类研究在理论和实践上都存在分歧, 比如个体词的归类, 汉语多功能现象策略问题和兼类词的定义。其次, 从词典学角度看, 汉英词典的词类标注是一个艰巨而复杂的老大难问题, 同时也是一件牵一发而动全身的大事。汉英词典词类标注研究在一些原则问题上仍然存在重大分歧, 比如汉英词典词类标注对象、标注体系、“词类对译”原则以及词类标注依据等; 因此, 汉语词类问题难, 汉英语文词典词类标注更难。

文章首先通过简要阐述汉英词典的分类和汉英词典近 200 年的发展历史总结指出词类标注信息是汉英语文词典语法信息不可缺少的一部分, 并且是目前汉英语文词典突破瓶颈问题的关键。接着在回顾汉语词类研究的基础上以认知语言学的原型范畴理论及去范畴化理论(包括功能语言学的语法隐喻和认知语言学的概念转喻)作为理论框架揭示词类范畴的静态与动态特征。词类范畴的历时动态性是多功能性的理论根源。然后在词类问题认知研究的基础上, 文章总结汉语语文词典词类研究成果对汉英语文词典词类标注的重大原则问题予以正面回答。最后文章总结主要发现的问题, 比如汉英语文词典词类标注的依据不是现有标注词类的汉语语文词典, 而是基于大型汉语语料库的词语用法模式调查, 并且指出今后研究的方向。因此本文研究对双语词典编纂研究特别是汉英双语词典的编纂具有理论和现实意义。

关键词: 汉英语文词典; 词类标注; 范畴化

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The introduction makes a clear statement about the motivation, range, aims and materials and overall arrangement of this research.

1.1 Notion discrimination

The author thinks it is necessary to define some notions or basic concepts at the beginning of the thesis, such as the definition of a dictionary and the definition of a Chinese-English (C-E) language dictionary. Thus it is particularly appropriate to start with definitions since the main object of lexicography is to define words and terms. The target of research in this dissertation is a bilingual dictionary. So what is a bilingual dictionary?

A bilingual dictionary refers to a language dictionary in which the headword appears in the form of one language (source language) and its equivalent exists in the form of another language (target language). In its narrow sense, refers to a language dictionary in which the headword appears in the form of one language (source language) and its equivalent exists in the form of another language (target language) and which is arranged in a certain order, mostly alphabetically, containing some word elements, words and expressions, generally providing information for their forms, pronunciations, functions, usages, meanings, collocations and etymologies, and supplying illustrative examples and sometimes pictures. In essence, what a headword in source language refers to is covered by its equivalents in target language. In its general sense, refers to bilingual dictionaries of all types. In its broadest sense, refers to all kinds of bilingual reference tools, e.g. bilingual dictionaries in traditional forms, multimedia bilingual dictionaries (e.g. CD-ROM bilingual dictionaries), electronic bilingual dictionaries, internet bilingual dictionaries, bilingual encyclopedias, bilingual handbooks, bilingual yearbooks,

bilingual almanacs, bilingual bibliographies, bilingual indices, bilingual chronicles of one's life, bilingual chronicle of events, etc..

Accordingly, a Chinese-English (C-E) bilingual dictionary, in its narrow sense, refers to a language dictionary in which the headword appears in the form of Chinese language and its equivalent exists in English and which is arranged in a certain order, mostly alphabetically, containing some word elements, words and expressions, generally providing information for their forms, pronunciations, functions, usages, meanings, collocations and etymologies, and supplying illustrative examples and sometimes pictures. In essence, what a headword in Chinese refers to is covered by its equivalents in English. In its general sense, it refers to all kinds of C-E bilingual dictionaries. In its broadest sense, refers to all kinds of bilingual reference tools.

The object of the dissertation is a C-E bilingual dictionary in its narrow sense, especially a C-E general (or general-purpose) dictionary. A C-E general dictionary is a prototype of C-E language dictionaries. It provides a comprehensive description of the whole language, with special attention to vocabulary and fulfils a number of different functions (information on meaning, spelling, idiomatic use etc.). Its specific definition will be clearer in Chapter two when bilingual dictionary typology is discussed.

1.2 Motivation

The research of parts-of-speech (POS for short hereinafter) labeling in C-E general dictionaries from both macro-aspects and micro-aspects has three motives. The first is that POS labeling is a tendency in C-E dictionary compilation; the second is that POS labeling is key to accurate translation of headwords in C-E dictionaries; and the last one is that the present research of POS labeling in C-E dictionary compilation is limited.

1.2.1 POS labeling as a tendency in C-E language dictionary compilation

POS labeling manifests as a tendency in C-E language dictionary compilation from three aspects.

Firstly, POS is a basic concept in grammar. General linguistics holds that the purpose of grammar study is to disclose the structural nature of a language. Structural linguistics presents the structural nature of a language through syntagmatic relation and paradigmatic relation between language units. A word class is a grammatical category determined by grammatical function. “A grammar or grammatical theory excluding POS labeling is beyond our imagination. There is no linguistic work without POS discussion in General Grammar.”(Zhang Bin, Fang Xujun: 2000:2) Therefore, POS labeling is indispensable in grammar theory. Accordingly, POS labeling is the big issue to solve in Chinese language studies ever since the Chinese Modern Linguistics began. On the one hand, the disputes in POS study in Chinese linguistics imply that POS labeling is tougher in Chinese and it needs more endeavors from scholars; on the other hand, POS labeling has aroused great attention from linguists. Many of them have launched some successful attempts with new linguistic theory.

Secondly, POS information of headwords is an important part of grammatical information in a dictionary, especially in a C-E general dictionary. Informativity is a key nature of a dictionary. The information in bilingual dictionaries consists of conceptual aspects, connotative aspect, stylistic aspect, collocative aspect, cultural aspect and grammatical aspect (see 2.1.2). The grammatical information can be classified into the macro grammatical information and micro grammatical information. The macro grammatical information includes syntax and morphology while the micro grammatical information includes: parts of speech, sentence patterns and collocations, etc..A grammar book provides the macro grammatical information about a language (syntax and morphology) while a dictionary supplies the micro grammatical information about a language (e.g. parts of speech, sentence patterns and collocations, etc.). The earliest dictionary in the world is no more than a glossary

for Latin learning. Many early C-E dictionaries in 19th century also are glossaries in some scientific fields, such as engineering and chemistry. But now we find that the microstructures of modern dictionaries or modern C-E general dictionaries are more exquisite and complete. With the development of dictionary compilation, grammatical information has become indispensable to the information structure of a dictionary, especially a C-E general dictionary for its bilingual feature. Huang Jianhua (1987:147) points out “it is a fatal responsibility for dictionary compilers or editors to provide grammatical information in a dictionary. Their fulfillment has become a criterion to evaluate the quality of the dictionary.” Therefore, grammatical information is inevitable in the development of language dictionary compilation, which of course includes POS labeling. Chapter 2 will discuss the importance of grammatical information in a general dictionary in detail.

Finally, from the perspective of function and users of C-E language dictionaries, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and the teaching of English as a foreign language require exhaustive grammatical information in a C-E general dictionary. C-E language dictionaries are classified into **active** C-E general dictionary and **passive** C-E general dictionary according to their functions. The former aims at helping readers use English on the basis of understanding, which requires detailed grammatical information more exigently; while the latter aims at helping readers understand English. Moreover, C-E general dictionaries are classified into C-E general dictionaries for **foreign learners** and C-E general dictionaries for **Chinese natives**. The former intend to help foreigners to study Chinese or do C-E translation, so they are expected to present more detailed and complete grammatical information, especially the POS information of headwords; while the latter helps Chinese natives to use or translate English. In the history of C-E language dictionary compilation, active C-E general dictionaries are the mainstream and C-E general dictionaries for foreigners will be the focus in future research. The 20th century witnessed the rise and development of China, while the

21st century will prove China to be more confident and charming in the international economic, political and cultural stage. Correspondingly, Chinese language or Mandarin has developed into a hit due to its profound cultural spirit. According to the official statistics, the Chinese learner in foreign countries exceeded 300 million up to 2003. At the same time, the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language has taken a great stride since it first became a discipline in the late 1970s. It offers both great opportunities and challenges to Chinese grammar study and C-E language dictionary compilation. Consequently, it promotes the Chinese POS study and POS study in C-E general dictionary compilation.

1.2.2 POS labeling directly effects the scientificity of microstructure of a C-E general dictionary

From the lexicographical perspective, POS labeling has profound influence on the microstructure of a C-E language dictionary, such as sense arrangement, the quality of equivalents, illustration providing and translation and grammatical information. Zgusta (1971:313) points out that correct POS labeling is the proposition of accurate translation of headwords. Thus, POS labeling is not just concerns grammatical information because it is a systematic project in C-E language dictionary compilation. No wonder that POS labeling has been a major nodus in C-E language compilation for a long time. It is not the fact that lexicographers and dictionary compilers reject POS labeling or neglect its importance but it is the complexity of POS labeling that block their way.

1.2.3 The POS labeling study in C-E language dictionary compilation is still in the beginning stage

First of all, POS labeling in C-E language dictionary compilation has weak theoretical basis. In other words, the theoretical study of POS labeling is immature. It not only concerns Chinese POS study but also C-E language dictionary

compilation. On the one hand, there is no complete grammar system in Chinese grammar, and POS study is the biggest problem causing many disputes and arguments, such as the criteria of POS labeling, the treatment of multi-category words, etc.; On the other hand, bilingual dictionary compilation has a comparatively short history and has suffered from hard situation due to some historical reasons, and C-E language dictionary compilation is the weakest in the chain. The works or collections on bilingual lexicography are limited. The works by Chinese lexicographers and linguists mainly include *Bilingual Lexicographical Studies* (Zhang Boran:1993), *Bilingual Lexicographical Studies* (Zhang Houchen:1994) *An Introduction to Bilingual Lexicography* (Huang Jianhua:1997) and *Introduction to Bilingual Lexicography* (Li Ming, Zhou Jinhua:2000). However, while we are reading these works, it is not too difficult to find that most of them discuss E-C language dictionary compilation or most content in the work targets E-C language dictionaries. For example, *Introduction to Bilingual Lexicography* by Li Ming and Zhou Jinhua (2000) only mentioned two C-E language dictionaries, *A Chinese-English Dictionary* (1980) and the 1996's revision compiled by Peking Foreign Studies University and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary* (1982) by Peking Language and Culture University. While the works or collections on POS labeling in C-E language dictionary are even fewer. Most of them are thesis published in lexicographical periodicals or linguistic periodicals. The research mainly concerns the necessity of POS labeling, principles and basis of POS labeling in C-E dictionary compilation, which will be depicted in Chapter Four in detail. The point is the theory of POS study and POS labeling is undergoing changes through conflicts and agreements with the development of linguistics and lexicography.

Then POS labeling is not only a theoretical issue but also a practical problem. Even though linguists have reached considerable agreements on POS study, they still hold different opinions or adopt different methods in the practical operation.

Therefore, the thesis attempts to make full of reachable references to conclude

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